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How the Indians Received the Light

One of Mr. Egerton R. Young’s stories of missionary work among the Cree Indians of North America, on his experience in teaching the Indians how to read, as told in “On the Indian’s Trail,” is most interesting as a tribute to the power of the simple Bible story of creation. He had drilled the Indians on the syllabic characters until they were quite familiar with them, using a large, white rock and a burnt stick instead of a blackboard and chalk, and had filled them with amazement by letting them read the name of God on the rock, together with such simple combinations as “God is love,” and “God loves you.” He continues:—*MISM December 1901, page 558.1*

“Then we opened our bundles of Bibles, and passing them round as far as they would do, I had them all turn to the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis. After some explanation of a few additional signs which they there saw upon the printed page, and which give some variation to the sound of the syllabic character to which they are attached, we began the study of the verse. Of course our progress at first was slow. It could not be otherwise under such circumstances. But we patiently persevered, and it was not very long ere they were able to read in their own language: ‘MAWACHE NISTUM KAESAMANETO KEOOSETOU KESIK MENA ASKE (In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.)’*MISM December 1901, page 558.2*

“When they had acquired the ability to read this verse for themselves, and had grasped a little of its meaning, there was

another outburst of delight. That first verse of Genesis is very suggestive and full of meaning to any one, no matter how learned, who tries to investigate it. It is in itself the first chapter of God's revelation of himself to man, and has long occupied the attention and study of the most godly and profound. Here, for the first time, it was being read by a company of poor Indians just emerging from paganism. But they were sharp and keen, and able to grasp a new truth; and so when the first verse opened before them with its wondrous meaning, great was their delight and amazement.*MISM December 1901, page 558.3*

“Now we know all about it!” some of them shouted. ‘The Kaesa-Maneto (the great God) made all these things, the heaven and the earth.’*MISM December 1901, page 559.1*

“Others said:—*MISM December 1901, page 559.2*

“Our fathers talked about it in their wigwams, and wondered, and wondered how all these things came as they are; but they had to confess that they were in darkness, and knew nothing. But now we know it! We know it!”*MISM December 1901, page 559.3*

“Over and over again they read the verse until they had thoroughly committed it to memory. And in after days, at many a camp fire and in many a hunting lodge, it was repeated to others who had not heard it, but who, on hearing it, were also filled with gratification and delight at the answer which it gave to what had long been a subject of perplexity and awe.”*MISM December 1901, page 559.4*

Thus we see the demonstration of the words of the psalmist: “The entrance of Thy Word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.” *Psalms 119:130. MISM December 1901, page 559.5*

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